

The Columbus Pottery Company

By

James L. Murphy



Contributions to Ohio Ceramic History

No. 1

2010

Grove ucky Press

© 2010

James L. Murphy
Grove ucky Press

Contributions to Ohio Ceramic History ; No. 1

Contents

Foreword	i
Introduction	1
The Bell Pottery Company	5
The Columbus Pottery Company	24
Herbert Goodwin	32
The Fire and After the Fire	41
The G. F. Brunt Tile and Porcelain Co.	51
Insulators	56
Joseph A. Nagle	69
Conclusion	77

Foreword

It is fitting to begin this modest series with an account of what is known regarding the Columbus Pottery Company, partly because there is absolutely no recent reference to this enterprise and very few examples of its product have survived, partly because I've spent (somewhat inadvertently) the last 36 years of my life in Columbus, and partly because it was in Columbus that my interest in Ohio ceramics really began.

Hired as an abstracter for the American Ceramic Society in 1974, I was briefly but intensely exposed to the incredibly diverse world of ceramics, as it then existed. It was language immersion learning a decade before

the term became fashionable. Thinking back, life at 65 Ceramic Drive might best be described as Dickensian, a small bunch of, for the most part, basically very good but slightly bizarre people, for the most part poorly paid, and for the most part devoted to their jobs and/or, for one reason or another, driven to perform them. They are all gone now, and the American Ceramic Society seems nearly so, but I still remember Geraldine “Gerry” Smith as a particularly kind and wise supervisor and I continued to write abstracts for the Society for many years. Two incidents stand out in my memory, one a stressful trip to the annual meeting held that year at White Sulphur Springs, Pennsylvania, where I was painfully out of my depth in a vast sea of ceramic expertise. The other incident, much more amusing in retrospect, was at the first and for me the only meeting of selected ACS staff to discuss development of a ceramics museum.

When I arrived at the meeting room where some of the Society's choicest ceramics were on display, a short, older gentleman pacing around the room came up, stuck his hand out, and said, "I'm Labino." Labino, Sabino, neither name meant anything to me at the time, so I simply said, "Hi, I'm Murphy." From there the conversation went nowhere and, for that matter, I don't think the plans for a ceramic museum did either. It was quite a few years before I heard of Dominick Labino and, I am sure he never heard of me again; thinking back, it is mildly amusing that while at the time I may not have known who he was, Labino certainly did.

As for the Columbus Pottery Co., I purchased my first and only piece at an early Scott Antique Show, where a dealer insisted it was an example of East Liverpool's East End Pottery's Columbia line of decorated ironstone.

Instead of pointing out that it was semi-porcelain ware and that the striking magenta backstamp distinctly said “Columbus,” not “Columbia,” I simply bought the compote for a nominal sum and began a long search for information on one of Ohio’s least known if not shortest-lived potteries. Along the way, I benefitted greatly from Worthington’s genial historian, the late Robert W. McCormick, whose wife Ginny I knew from her frequent visits to the Ohio Historical Society library. How I met Bob, I honestly don’t recall— perhaps an indication of just how low-key he could be or of how forgetful I can be. I definitely remember, however, once telephoning him about sculptor Augusta St. Gaudens and learning not only much about that Flint, Ohio, native, but also more about the Columbus Pottery Co. Again, pursuing leads about Joseph Nagle, a Zanesville

and Columbus resident who early on produced imitations of Radford art pottery, I gathered considerable information from Baldwin-Wallace professor Norman Clary that helped relate Joseph Nagle to the Columbus Pottery Co. I am extremely grateful to these and others who have contributed not only information but also knowledge along the way.

Introduction

Other than rock-filled glacial till and perhaps some finer alluvial deposits, central Ohio is not generally blessed with clay of sufficient quality for ceramics, a deficiency that served to limit the number of potteries developed in the region, at least until railroad transportation permitted the shipping of suitable clay from other areas. In the beginning there were a few relatively crude earthenware potteries producing low-fired, lead-glazed “redware.” These potters rarely if ever marked their wares, and no examples are known from the pioneer potters of Franklin County.

The first of these was probably Frederick Abbe, who came to the United States from Hesse-Darmstadt in 1831 and from York, Pennsylvania, to Columbus in 1838. The year 1845 found him at 252 High St. In 1850 he was operating a (literally) one-horse pottery probably located at 311 South Fourth St., producing about \$900 worth of ware a year. By 1860 he had an additional man, Frederick Fisher, working for him, but it was still (literally) a one horse operation. In 1870 he was still producing about \$900 of ware a year. The 1878/79 city directory indicates that he was manufacturing or, more likely, dealing in queensware, as the 1880 census describes him (as George F. Abbey) as a dealer in crockery. He was still active as a “merchant,” aged 81 years, in 1900, but it is not clear when actual production of pottery ended—doubtless many years earlier.

One of Abbe's chief competitors was Amon Jenkins, born in New Jersey around 1797 and potting in Columbus by 1843, at the northeast corner of Front and Rich St. All traces of this pottery would have been removed by the later construction of the Lazarus department store. In 1870 Jenkins was producing \$500 worth of "earth and stoneware," abetted by his son William H., aged 29 years. A decade later, Amon was gone and William was a guard at the Ohio Penitentiary.

The names of several other early Columbus potters have been culled from early city directories. These include Thomas Buchanan, born in Maine and active in 1850, probably working at Amon Jenkins' pottery, since he lived on the north side of Rich Street, the first door east of Front. Also Lawrence Dipple, in

1845 at 252 High Street; by 1850 Dipple had left Columbus for the greener pastures of Donnelsville, a little town in Clark County, near the National Route (old U.S Route 40). Another relatively ephemeral Columbus potter was John Markle at the southeast corner of Third and South Streets from 1845 to 1850, about whom nothing else is known.

By the latter part of the 19th Century, although stoneware continued to be manufactured in rural areas of Ohio where suitable clays were abundant, little or none was manufactured in Franklin County, railroad transportation making the importing of industrial stoneware more economical. In addition, yellow ware and queensware had been largely replaced by white ironstone, often decorated with hand-painted transfer prints and gold trim. White ironstone became, for the most

part, the preferred material for both kitchenware and toilet ware, the demand being largely responsible for the phenomenal growth of the pottery industry in the East Liverpool area, with minor contributions from Akron and Cincinnati. The later decade or so saw a rather rapid decline in the popularity of transfer-printed ironstone in favor of much thinner, lighter, decal-decorated semi-porcelain, although sturdier ironstone continued in use as “hotel china” and sanitary ware.

The Bell Pottery Company, Findlay, Ohio

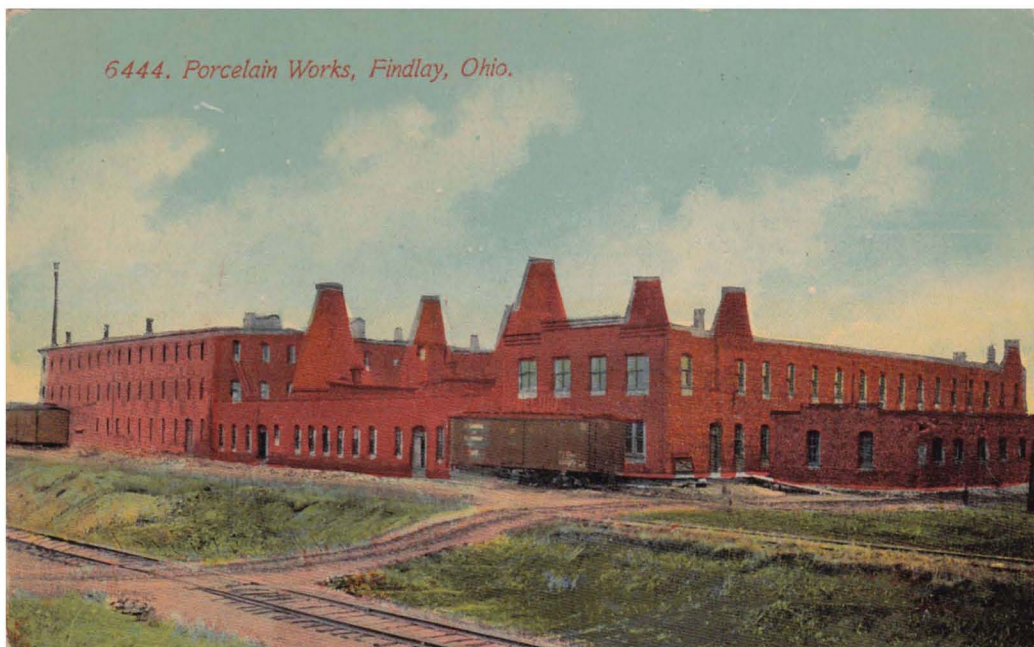
In addition to the availability of high quality clays and to demand, the latter largely a function of population size but both factors somewhat offset by improvements in transportation, abundant fuel was an important con-

sideration in locating potteries. In southeastern Ohio, fuel was usually supplied by bituminous coal, often found in direct association with high quality fire clay beds of the Pennsylvanian geological system. At various times, however, natural gas fuel was so abundant as to become a dominant factor in the location of potteries. The Bell Brothers Pottery (later simply the Bell Pottery Co.) of Findlay, Ohio is perhaps the most striking example of how captive to such economic variables the ceramics industry could be. It also is of particular interest to students of Columbus, Ohio's ceramic history.

Lured to Findlay, Ohio, by the abundant natural gas discovered as a consequence of the Findlay oil and gas boom of the 1880s— and by a \$10,000 bonus and free building site promised by the city fathers— the Bell Brothers Pottery



Bell Pottery Co., Findlay, Ohio, 1889



Undated Later View of the “Porcelain Works”

Co., also known as the Bell Brothers & Co. pottery, decided to locate there. Founded by three East Liverpool men, namely brothers William M. and Edward F. Bell and Henry W. Flentke (only the last named a professional potter), the pottery began production in July 1889, in a fine, new brick building in the north end of Findlay. Flentke was described as the genial traveler for the pottery (i. e., salesman). By March 1890, the pottery was running day and night, unable to keep up with orders. Three new kilns were added to increase production. Labor troubles were no sooner settled than a natural gas shortage developed. In January, 1893, the pottery converted to coal, a fuel of course that now had to be imported. Then, in May, 1893, a severe wind storm caused more than \$8,000 damage. The roof was blown off the decorating room and the six kilns north of the decorating room were destroyed. In September, 1893, the pottery closed indefinitely.

The genial Flentke found new friends in Evansville, Indiana, where he organized the Crown Pottery Co., and eventually withdrew from the Bell Brothers company, which was reorganized as a corporation rather than a partnership in early 1898, as the Bell Pottery Co., Flentke receiving \$7,295 for his share. The earlier BBCo/CHINA mark was replaced by B PCo/F O or an impressed “Bell Pottery Co.” mark. At his death in 1917 at the age of 50, Flentke “ had been general manager of the Crown Pottery Co., Evansville Indiana for many years (*Brick and Clay Record*, Nov 6 1917).

The trouble-filled history of the Bell Pottery has been detailed elsewhere (Murphy 1994)—labor problems, depletion of the gas supply, damage by wind and fire, competition from foreign imports, a legal battle over refusing to



**The Most Common Bell Pottery Backstamp:
B P Co/ F O.**

join a pottery trust, more fire and storm damage, and the death of President William Bell in 1902—but the company survived, producing beautiful hand-painted ware and high-quality dinner and toilet ware until 1904. Initial plans to add a second plant at Findlay developed into the ambitious idea of building a twelve-kiln pottery in the eastern part of Columbus, where



**Rare Earlier Backstamps for the Bell
Brothers Pottery Co.**



**Bell Brothers Ironstone Pitcher with Moss Rose
Design and Gold Highlights**

HOSPITAL WARE
ELECTRIC GLOBES
AND SPECIALTIES

REMITTANCE MUST BE MADE DIRECT TO THE COMPANY

13

160 acres was purchased shortly before Bell's death. Completion was initially scheduled for June, 1903, but the decision to move the old Findlay plant to Columbus caused a considerable delay. When A. S. Hughes took over as manager, July 10, 1903 he expected to have the Columbus plant in operation by early September (*Glass and Pottery World* (11(7): 20). Accompanying this announcement was a description of the plant:

“The Bellwood tract comprises 140 acres of level ground in the highlands contiguous to Columbus and has transportation facilities including two electric and three steam railroads in immediate proximity... The pottery structure, which cost \$200,000, is practically under one roof... the main building being three stories in height. The kiln house and clay and boiler houses are of two and one-story height respectively, and the entire plant is of heavy brick construction. fire walled, and the exterior well calcimined, producing an effect of dazzling cleanliness...”

An ominous note sounded in November, 1903, when it was reported (*Glass and Pottery World* 11(3): 20) that the 12 kiln Columbus plant was under roof and production was expected to begin by August 1st. “Manager Rose [otherwise unidentified but possibly Hughes is intended] hints 12 more kilns to be built in 1904 but presumably this will not be done unless trade conditions demand it.” Trade conditions in fact did not demand it

The move from Findlay was again announced in November 1904, with production to start at Columbus in January, 1905. In September, 1905, President Edward Bell gave the Columbus press a tour of the new plant, with six kilns completed and the foundations laid for six more. The *Clay Record* of September 15, 1905 (27(5): 35) reported that the Bell Pottery

Co. of Columbus had started their large plant. Several hundred men would be employed as soon as “everything gets going good.”

The old Findlay plant was leased by U.S. Porcelain Co. in October, 1905, to make electrical insulators and that appears to have been the end of the Bell Pottery in Findlay, Ohio. The Columbus plant probably produced pottery for about a year but no marked examples have ever been found, and surface survey of the site has yielded only a few sherds of heavy “hotel china” and sanitary porcelain.

By September 1906 the pottery was in the hands of a receiver and remained idle for many years. The *Trenton Evening Times* (August 19, 1907) noted that an additional receiver was being appointed and opined that the company had gone under while trying to promote a land scheme. *Brick* (August 1909: 77) announced

that the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas had ordered receiver Henry Gumble to sell the property “at an upset price of \$90,000.” Only twenty of the house lots the company laid out had been sold. So much for the “land scheme.” The pottery was finally purchased by the Sanitary Earthenware Specialty Co. of New Jersey to manufacture bathtubs “and other toilet conveniences.” Edward Bell died in Alaska in 1915 while on a prospecting or hunting trip. Today much of the pottery site is vacant land owned by the City of Bexley. As noted above, diligent surface survey yielded only a few fragments of unglazed porcelain sanitary ware and unmarked sherds of thick “hotel ware,” the latter indicating that the Bell Pottery finally did go into production but no longer made the fine grade of dinnerware for which the Findlay plant had become known.



Hand-Painted Bell Pottery Bowl



Hand-painted Bell Pottery Co. Vase



Hand-painted Bell Pottery Co. Mugs

As for manager Albert S. Hughes, the family moved back to East Liverpool, where 1910 found him working as a clerk at the city water works, an interesting circumstance since back in 1901, while still president of the NBOP, Hughes served as host to a visiting Japanese pottery manufacturer. According to *Clay Record* (December 30, 1901), H. Yatsumura found the most interesting institution visited to be the city waterworks, which gave him considerable concern:

“The most interesting institution and the one which gave the foreigner more concern than any other was the city waterworks. The reservoir was visited and the Jap expressed astonishment that any one could make crockery with the water so dirty.”

Albert S. Hughes died January 13, 1913. Several months following his death, the Brotherhood awarded his widow an annuity of

\$390, which suggests that there was not much of an estate (Canfield *Mahoning Dispatch*, September 26, 1913).



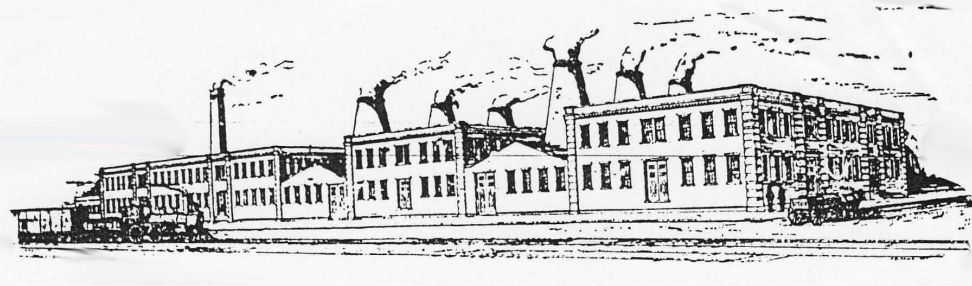
Three-handled Cup Hand-painted by Mary E. McKee, China Decorator



Flask-shaped Bell Pottery Co. Vase

The Columbus Pottery Company

COLUMBUS POTTERY COMPANY'S PLANT



1903

The earliest available reference to the Columbus Pottery Co. is a paragraph appearing in the June 28, 1902, issue of *China Glass and Lamps*, indicating that “a new art pottery” was intended for Worthington, Ohio, making art ware including jardinières and specialties. Capitalized at \$100,000, by “Columbus parties,” the company would employ about 200 people managed by a man “formerly employed at Zanesville.” *Clay Record* of the same date identified E. A. Montgomery, an expert pottery

manufacturer, as being in charge of the company which had been organized only a few weeks earlier. A. J. Sheppard of Zanesville was president J. M. Schooler, Secretary, and A. J. Solmon treasurer. By December 15, E. E. Beckett had commenced construction. A year and a half later, Elmer E. Beckett would file suite for \$4742 due for materials furnished (*Clay Record*, July 30, 1904).

According to the Westerville *Public Opinion* of March 17, 1903, Mr. Samuel J. Scott had come to Columbus in the interest of the Columbus Pottery Co. Described as a courteous gentleman, thoroughly posted in pottery, Scott (1847-1922) planned to push completion of the plant at the earliest possible date. The contract had been let several months earlier but the long severe winter had prevented any work.

Plans were to extend a railroad switch to enable the builder to receive construction materials.

Samuel J. Scott was none other than the son of George Scott, a Staffordshire Englishman who had begun making Rockingham and yellow ware in Cincinnati in the 1850s after dealing in queensware and other commodities for a time. That firm became George Scott Sons with his death in 1889 and turned to the manufacture of white granite decorated and printed table and toilet wares. A receiver was appointed in 1900 (*Brick*, September) but by 1901 it was owned by George Scott's daughter, Sarah A. Waite (Stout 1923: 82). Harry Molineux was manager and in February, 1902, when the Scott pottery resumed operations after a long period of inactivity. By then, however, S. J. Scott, had left it for the Zanesville Art Pottery.

Unfortunately, no other mention of Samuel Scott in regard to the Columbus Pottery Co. has been found, and matters are confused by information in *Glass and Pottery World* of May, 1903, that the company had been reorganized with George Hasbrook president, J. M. Loren vice president, and J. M. Schooler secretary. A. J. Solomon had sold his interest to Harry J. Taylor, who succeeded him as trustee. George Hasbrook was a dealer in china and glassware, so clearly had a vested interest in the fledgeling pottery. James M. Loren and James M. Schooler were both lawyers. Albert S. Hughes (1862-1913), as noted in the previous section on the Bell Pottery Co., was president of the National Brotherhood of Potters. Born in Wheeling, West Virginia, the son of a shoemaker, Hughes married a Wheeling girl, Anna B. Hasenauer, in 1889 and served as president of the NBOP for most of the

1890s, successfully merging it with the eastern Potters National Union (Gates 1984: 158). “This is the company of Columbus men who have lured the president of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters from the ranks of organized labor, to take the management of their factory, and they got a mighty good man in A. S. Hughes. It remains to be seen how effectively Mr. Hughes can change his point of view from a champion of employe[e]s to an employer of labor, but if he stays in the pottery business a reasonable length of time experience will change it for him.”

The confusion lies in the fact that although this article and a brief note in the May 14, 1903, issue of the *Clay Record* (v. 22 no. 9) refer to Hughes as the manager of the *Columbus Pottery Co.*, the August 29, 1903, issue of the *Clay*

Record (v. 23, no 4) mentions him as manager of the *Bell Pottery Co.* at Columbus. It is possible that Samuel J. Scott lasted only a few months at the Columbus Pottery Co. and was replaced by A. S. Hughes in May, 1903, who in turn left for the Bell Pottery Co. by July, but this seems unlikely. *Glass and Pottery World* (July, 1903, 21(7): 20), reported that Hughes opened his office July 10 in the new Hayden Building and found correspondence and details elbow deep. By the end of 1904, Scott was representing the Sharp Sand Brick Co., of Columbus (plant at Sugar Grove), as a charter member in the National Association of Manufacturers of Sand-Lime Products (*Clay Record*, December 30, 1904; *Brick*, January 1905: 34). Yet by August, 1905, he was suing the directors of the Sharp sand brick company to keep them from selling and buying the plant (*Clay Record*, August 31, 1905). According to

the 1906/07 Columbus city directory Scott was a “Promoter,” the same source for 1908/09 listing him as “Broker.” 1910 found him working for the Franklin Moving Sign Co. By 1920 he was retired and back in Cincinnati, living with his wife and widowed sister-in-law. Scott died at the Masonic home in Springfield, Ohio, January 30, 1922 (*Clay Worker* 77(3): 286).

As for the Columbus Pottery Co., further reorganization seems to have occurred, for a year later (*Clay Record*, June 30, 1904) it was incorporated by Hasbrook, Loren, Schooler, Taylor, and M. S. Spohn. Elmer Beckett was not the only unsatisfied creditor, for Sackett Mining Supply Co. also petitioned that the pottery be placed in receivership (*Clay Record*, December 15, 1904). Any creditors appear to have been satisfied. *Clay Record* (February 28,

1905, and *Brick* (v. 22 no. 5: 267, May, 1905) both reported that the pottery “erected over a year ago but never started up,” was to receive the finishing touches and be under headway in 30 days. Herbert Goodwin, who had been superintendent of the Salineville China Co., was



Only Known Columbus Pottery Co. Product



Unique Columbus Pottery Co. Backstamp

to be general manager and the plant would make hotel china. In a similar note in *Clay Record* (May 31, 1905), Goodwin is mentioned as having formerly superintending the Thompson Pottery at East Liverpool.

Herbert Goodwin

Herbert Goodwin was born in Longton, Staffordshire, England, April 19, 1862, a son of John and Maria Amison Goodwin, and worked

in Staffordshire at the celebrated Grimwade Pottery. He and wife Gertrude migrated to the United States in 1902. Goodwin worked at Trenton, New Jersey, for a while, then spent two years managing the C. C. Thompson pottery in East Liverpool, before being appointed manager of the Dresden Pottery in Salineville (Trenton *Evening News*, January 10, 1905). Any possible relationship to John Goodwin (1818-), founder of East Liverpool's Goodwin Pottery (1875-1913) remains unclear. Herbert Goodwin had a long though somewhat peripatetic and poorly documented career as a pottery manager. A brief squib in *Brick* (July 1909), indicates that he "was formerly connected with the Goodwin Pottery Co. of East Liverpool" and was located in Columbus for several years but had since gone to Mexico City to assume management of a pottery owned by French capitalists. The

following month, *Brick* announced that he was in charge of a five-kiln plant near Mexico City but “more recently” had been managing the Willetts Manufacturing Co. of Trenton, New Jersey. The Trenton *Evening Times* (“Former Trenton Men Suffer by Big Blaze at Columbus, Ohio,” November 10, 1906), in reporting on the fire at the Columbus Pottery Co. (see below, p. 41) mentioned that Mr. Goodwin was well known among manufacturing and operative potters in Trenton and took several Trenton potters with him when he left to become manager of the Columbus plant. As for working at the Mexican pottery, Goodwin appears to have done well, for in 1909 the Mexican Art Pottery won a gold medallion for the superior quality of its decorations, the success “due in no small part to the splendid work of Goodwin (Trenton *Evening News*, December 14, 1909). In the following year *Clay* (May 30 1910)

reported that Goodwin was contemplating establishing a plant for manufacturing ironstone china at a cost of less than \$80,000, the location presumably being up for grabs, and the *Trenton Evening News* (March 1, 1910) announced that he had found the climate not to his liking and was relocating to East Liverpool. The end of this decade found him at the Salem China Co., which had recently been bought by the Sebrings from Patrick McNicol of East Liverpool. Goodwin was touted as “one of the most widely known pottery managers in the country, and at one time managing a pottery plant in Mexico” (*Brick and Clay Record*, July 15, 1919). Although working in Salem, Goodwin maintained his residence in East Liverpool. (At this time there was regular and efficient interurban transit between the two towns, although the trip did take nearly two hours one-

way.) Three years later Goodwin left Salem China to manage the Chelsea China Co. in New Cumberland, West Virginia (*Brick and Clay Record*, August 9, 1921). Under his management, production increased, quality improved, Chelsea China introduced a decorated line of hotel ware (*Brick* February 7, 1922), and the firm installed the first tunnel kiln in the Ohio Valley (*Brick and Clay Record*, November 29, 1921). For what must have been a very short period of time Goodwin seems to have been at Crescent China in Alliance, Ohio, leaving there in 1923 to go to Atlas China Co. in Niles, Ohio (*Ceramic Industry*, September 1923). When this plant was damaged by fire Goodwin completely rebuilt and remodeled it into one of the most modern of the periodic kiln type plants. Later, with the merger with Globe China, Goodwin would be sent to the Cambridge plant where he remained until moving to Kenilworth Tile in

1928 (*Ceramic Industry* February 1928). There he oversaw installation of a glost tunnel kiln that doubled the plant's capacity (*Ibid.* March 1928).

In 1930, 67 year old Herbert Goodwin and wife Gertrude were living with his son-in-law in East Liverpool, where he was an inspector for the Ohio Industrial Commission, but in 1934 he became general manager of the Belmar Pottery Co. in East Liverpool. This was the old D. E. McNicol plant, the last in Ohio to produce typical yellow ware and Rockingham utility ware (including popular Rebekah at the Well teapots). Yellow ware and Rockingham production continued here long after all other East Liverpool potteries had converted to manufacturing whiteware but according to Gates and Ormerod (1982: 185) the McNicol interests disposed of both of their plants in 1928

in order to concentrate on their pottery at Clarksburg, West Virginia. This may have been so, but it does not seem to have been the end of the pottery, for *Ceramic Industry* (March 1931) reported that while the dinnerware plant had been shut down indefinitely, the McNicol yellow ware plant had resumed production after being operated part-time for several months,” with 100 employees manufacturing a new line of tea pitchers, jugs, vases and other shapes in many colors. What was this ware like? We have no idea. Neal McNicol was general manager and William Gilgallon was superintendent during this period. It appears that the McNicol plant did not actually close until the summer of 1933—“several months ago”-- according to the October 1933 issue of *Ceramic Industries*, which also reported that the plant had been leased to the Trymor Manufacturing Co. of New Philadelphia, with William Gilgallon, formerly

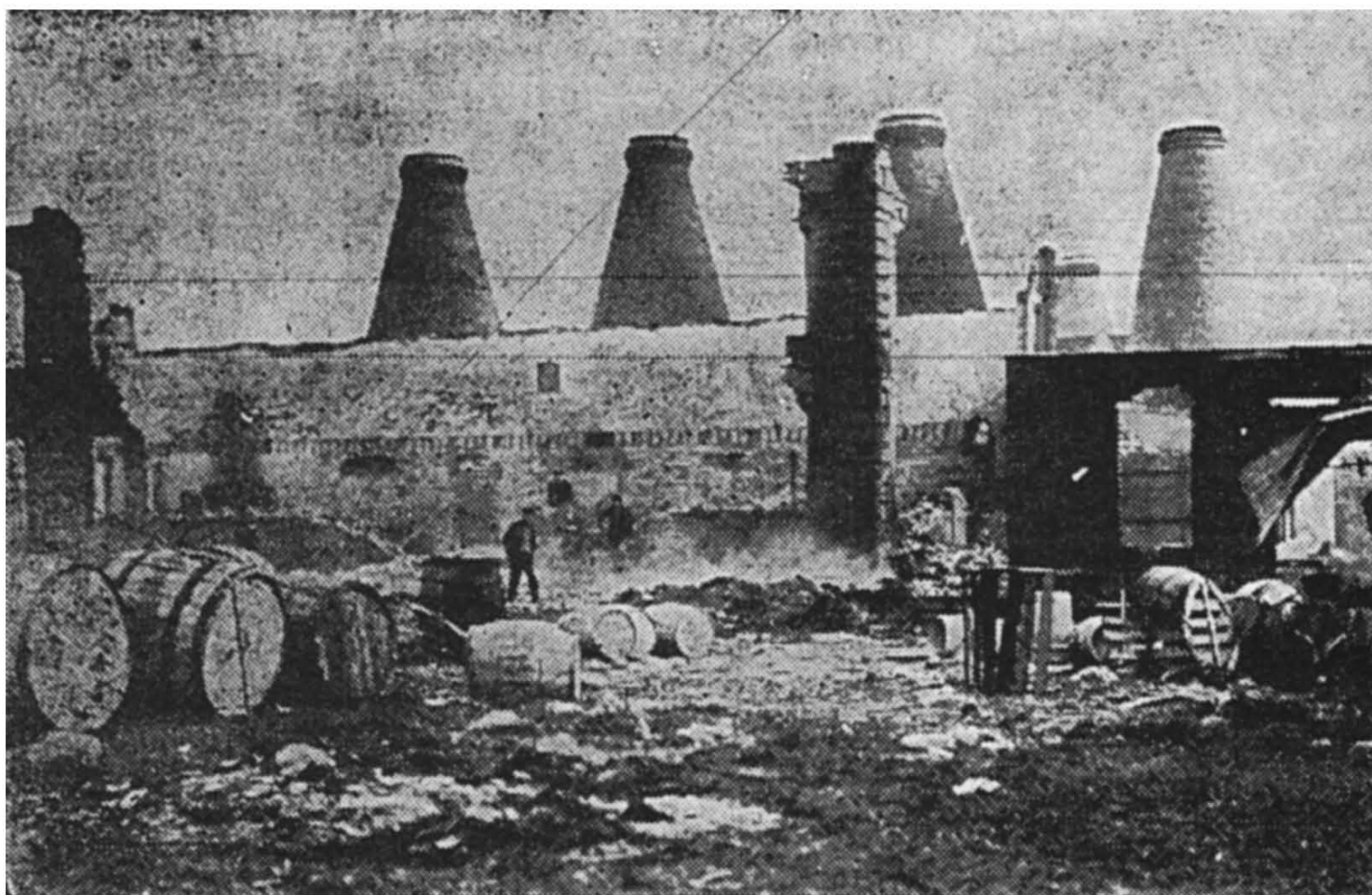
superintendent of the McNicol plant, continuing at the East Liverpool plant. Trymor—there is a New Deal name to inspire hope if ever there was one. Alas, by March of 1934, Trymor had suspended operations and gone into receivership and Herbert Goodwin was general manager of the Belmar Pottery Co., which had acquired the lease (*Ceramic Industry*, March 1934). In May, 1937, the Goodwin Pottery Co. was formed by Herbert Goodwin, Neil Kormos and Ernest E. Goodwin to utilize this plant, (*Ceramic Industry*, May 1937). Neil Kormos remains a bit of a mystery, a silent not to say invisible partner or investor. Otherwise, this enterprise was definitely a family affair. It receives scant mention by Gates and Ormerod (1982: 339), who list it as operating from 1936 to 1940. Gertrude Goodwin died in 1943 and Herbert moved to the Ohio Masonic Home in Springfield, where he died May 2, 1944. Son

Ernest E. passed away May 15, 1997, at the age of 90. Although something of a digression, his father's biography has been presented here partly to illustrate how peripatetic the ceramic profession could be, particularly during the Great Depression.



Columbus Pottery Company Compote

The Fire and After the Fire



To return to the history of the Columbus Pottery Company, Herbert Goodwin's tenure there must have been very brief, for

in early November, 1906, the plant was “completely” destroyed by fire. The loss of \$50,000 was only partially covered by \$5,500 of insurance, and two large stockholders, Owen Harbage (1838-1917, farmer and banker from Madison County) and J[erome] T. Gratigny (1857-1939, Columbus, Ohio, and later Lemon City, Florida, hotel keeper), quickly filed to have a receiver appointed. According to *China, Glass and Lamps* (November 17, 1906: 7), the plant had cost \$130,000 to build, had been in operation for less than a year, and was manufacturing a fine grade of semi-porcelain.

The fire, although it destroyed only the warehouse and the roof of one kiln shed, leaving all the kilns and machinery intact and unharmed, precipitated bankruptcy. A

trustee, Frank M. Raymund, was to sell the plant in late January, 1907, according to *Glass and Pottery World* (15(1): 36). This appears to have been accomplished, for *Brick* (March, 1907) reported that it had been sold to the American Mutual Pottery Co. for \$18,500. The same publication reported the following month that rebuilding would start shortly. Some perspective is given by an article in the *Trenton Evening Times* ("Columbus Pottery Troubles Increase," August 19, 1907), which reported that attempts to raise additional capital for rebuilding had met with indifferent success and manager Goodwin had left to join a company promoting a railroad concern.

It remains unknown whether the American Mutual Pottery Co. ever began operation of the pottery but probably not. (Secretary of State records indicate that the

company was never incorporated in Ohio, and its backers remain unknown.) *Brick* (May 1909: 265) reported the start-up of the Buxton-Beatty Pottery during the week of May 3rd. The enterprise had been inactive for several years and was now described as one of the best arranged potteries in the United States, with not a wood floor in it except in the glost warehouse, all other floors being concrete. A further report (*Ibid.*, June 1909: 338) indicated that the firm was marketing their product “under different methods than other manufacturers” and that the “different way,” unfortunately otherwise undescribed, made the pottery’s prospects exceedingly bright. Operations had resumed in full by August, 1909, when we learn that Harry Buxton had been manager of the decorating shops at the Sebring Pottery for many years; yet, by October (*Ibid.*: 157) the pottery was again idle. David McDaniel, a

Columbus manufacturer had petitioned for a receiver, claiming he was owed \$30,000. McDaniel also claimed that Buxton had left the company without giving any reason. Whatever his reasons, it appears that Harry Buxton returned to East Liverpool, where he resumed work as a pottery decorator, continuing in this line until his death in 1931.

James C. B. Beatty is a different matter. Born in tiny Fredericktown (Columbiana County), Ohio, the son of Isaac and Amy Ann Beatty, in 1876, he descended from “good Irish stock.” There is a fulsome sketch of Beatty’s early life (Claybaugh 1913: 504-505) that is both informative and entertaining enough to quote in its entirety:

“James C. B. Beatty went to the common schools until he was eleven years of age, when he quit, and began to work on the home farm, continuing there until he was

twenty-one. He then went to East Liverpool, Ohio, and took a two years' course in photography, but gave that up, and went to East Palestine, Ohio, and began traveling for a pottery company in Indiana. He soon made his mark in the pottery field and was given the position of manager of the sales department of the Sebring Pottery Company of Ohio, in which position he remained until 1908, when he came to Frankfort, Ind., and organized the Beatty Pottery Manufacturing Company, with a capital of forty thousand dollars [still listed in Longdon's 1913 *Directory*]. This was in December of 1908. He also organized in 1910, the Diamond Pottery Manufacturing Company, capitalized at twelve thousand dollars, and then the James C. Beatty and Son Manufacturing Company, capitalized at ten thousand dollars, and doing a mail order business strictly, being the only pottery conducting business in that way in the state. In 1911 he went to East Palestine, Ohio, and organized the Consolidated lars [*sic*], and now, Mr. Beatty is acting as secretary of this business firm. He also holds the position of general manager of the sales department of the H. R. Wyllie China Manufacturing Company of Huntington, W. Va. All of these companies are in first-class order, which fact attests to the business ability of Mr. Beatty and his competence as an organizer. On March 20, 1903, Mr. Beatty was married to Gertrude K. Barner, a native and resident of Frankfort. One child has been born of this union, Newton Gaskill, born in Frankfort, Ind., April 10, 1904, and who is now attending school in this city.

Fraternally, Mr. Beatty is a Mason, belonging to the York Rite. He also holds membership with the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks. Mr. Beatty has been a great traveler all of his life, not only traveling for pleasure but in the pursuit of his business. He estimates that he has covered nearly six hundred and fifty thousand miles, and as he is yet a young man, his record when he quits may be a world-beater. His son, Gaskill, from the time he was a year old until he was six years of age, accompanied his parents and traveled a total of 62,000 miles, visiting every city of 50,000 population and over between New York and Denver. Mr. Beatty is very gifted in language and mathematics, having cultivated a knowledge of these by self-training and reading.”

There are some interesting aspects to this account. It is stated that the Beattys had only one child, and so the census taker probably mistakenly heard “Milton” instead of “Newton.” But then Beatty organized the James C. Beatty and Son Manufacturing Company at a time when Newton was less than ten years old! Perhaps he anticipated that the precocious sprite would grow into the position. It is also interesting that J. C.

B. Beatty worked for the Sebring Pottery, as this doubtless is where he met Harry Buxton. Still more intriguing is the fact that nowhere among the numerous companies mentioned in this sketch is there any reference to the Buxton-Beatty Pottery of Columbus, Ohio, which must have been fitted in between the Beatty Pottery Manufacturing Company and the Diamond Pottery Manufacturing Company. It seems clear that the demise of Buxton-Beatty can be attributed to the fact that Beatty was primarily a salesman and Buxton, however skilled he may have been in the decorating department, was not equipped to manage all the other various aspects of a commercial pottery.

The 1910 Indiana census lists Beatty as a commercial traveler for a queensware company, living with his family in Frank-

fort, including 6 year old son Milton G. Wife Gertrude K. Beatty is listed as widowed in 1920, living with her mother and son *Newton G.* Beatty, aged 15. In 1930 Gertrude is listed as divorced, still living in Frankfort, while in 1924 James C. B. Beatty was general manager of the World Pottery & China Co., a wholesale crockery dealer located in East Liverpool, with son Newton as secretary (East Liverpool city directory 1924/25). By 1930 Newton had more or less come into his own and was a commercial traveler for cement in Bluffton, Indiana. The father, known locally as “Alphabetical Beatty” (J.C.B.), was lodging in the Travelers Hotel in East Liverpool, working as a pottery salesman. Somewhat ironically, in the same hotel was living none other than Frederick H. Read, ceramic designer par excellence and the future father of Fiesta Ware. J. C. B. Beatty had taken

time out to run for mayor of East Liverpool and then unsuccessfully for governor as an anti-Prohibitionist in 1922 and 1924. In 1928 he announced his candidacy with the gift of a piece of pottery to retiring three term governor Vic Donahey, perhaps hoping to get an endorsement from “Honest Vic.” Thrice defeated as a Democrat, in 1932 he was defeated in the Republican primary with only 12,000 votes, compared to the 280,000 votes racked up by rival David B. Ingalls and 125,000 for former governor Myers Y. Cooper (*Newark Advocate*, May 12, 1932). According to the *Marion Star* (March 11, 1932) Beatty advocated a reduction in the cost of state government, a state and federal guarantee of 50 per cent of all bank deposits, repeal of the Volstead Act, and “adoption of states rights.” His somewhat ambiguous slogan for his earlier campaigns was “Fearless until elected.”

Beatty died in 1944 at the Lima State Hospital for the Criminally Insane and is buried there. An obituary in the *East Liverpool Review* (February 18, 1944), reveals that “Alphabetical Beatty” had left town about ten years earlier on a “pottery calling trip in southern Ohio and never returned.” Indictment in Cincinnati on a bad check charge led to his commitment, a sad end to a colorful career. Son Newton’s whereabouts were unknown to the *Review* but it reported that a brother Wade Beatty, a commercial salesman for Warwick Pottery, had died at Carrollton, Ohio, just two weeks previously.

The G. F. Brunt Tile Company

In spite of the rather scattershot disappearance of both Buxton and Beatty from the scene, the Columbus Pottery Co.

would experience something of a rebirth, due to another East Liverpudlian. According to the late Jack Tod (1977: 75) George Brunt sold his East Liverpool electrical porcelain plant to General Porcelain in 1911, organizing the Brunt Tile & Porcelain Co. in 1914. Brunt was president, H. D. Clark vice-president, J. T. Herbert secretary, and W. F. Steele treasurer and general manager. The Columbus Pottery Co. plant at Chaseland was enlarged and refitted. Both porcelain and mosaic tiling were made, although the mosaic tile production is generally thought to have ended in 1920 (Tod 1977: 75) and the porcelain insulator business in 1925.

Brick and Clay Record (July 7, 1914) reported that G. F. Brunt of East Liverpool had organized the G. F. Brunt Co. to take over the plant and assets of the *Chaseland* [!] Pottery Co. Idle for quite some time, the

plant required the purchase of new machinery to manufacture floor and wall tile. J. A. Nagle of Zanesville was “associated.” Two weeks later (July 21, 1914), the same trade paper announced that the ten kiln plant at Chaseland had been purchased by Brunt and Nagle and would be converted into a tile plant employing nearly 200 men.



Mosaic Tile from the Chaseland Site

BELL PHONE, NORTH 5754

CITIZ. PHONE, 48-WORTHINGTON

THE BRUNT TILE & PORCELAIN CO.
MANUFACTURERS
OF
CERAMIC MOSAIC FLOOR TILE
AND
HIGHEST GRADE PORCELAIN
FOR ALL ELECTRICAL PURPOSES

Columbus, Ohio.

Sept, 1, 1916.

Peacock Coal Co.,

Pomeroy, Ohio.

Gentlemen:-

Kindly quote us price in car load your best
lump coal, also advise us freight rate to Worthington,
Franklin County, Ohio.

Thanking you for the information, we beg to
remain,

Very Respectfully Yours,

THE BRUNT TILE & PORCELAIN CO..

Int. 75¢
Circular

Brunt Letterhead Dated 1914



Hexagonal Floor Tile from Brunt Site

As late as August, 1923, the company was having “a good run of business in porcelains for all sorts of insulation” (*The Clay-Worker* (80(2): 150). W. F. Steele, still the

general manager, reported that improvements begun a year earlier had been completed and that a large force of men was being employed continually.

Tod (1977: 73-74) also provides the history of Brunt's earlier endeavors in East Liverpool (as do Gates and Ormerod (1962: 19)), where Brunt and brother-in-law Charles Thompson operated the electrical porcelain portion of the "Riverside Knob Works" as Brunt & Thompson, following the retirement in 1895 of Henry Brunt, father of George F. and William H. (who continued the door knob part of the business). George F. Brunt bought out Thompson's interest in 1897, continuing as the G. F. Brunt Porcelain Co. until it was merged into the General Porcelain Co. of Parkersburg, West Virginia, in 1911.

Insulators

Unlike the floor tile produced at the Columbus plant, which were never marked, Brunt did “brand” the porcelain insulators for the most part. Unfortunately, the same “BRUNT” mark was used on products of both his East Liverpool and Columbus plants while General Porcelain also continued to use the name “BRUNT” on many of their specialty items produced at the Parkersburg plant, it does not appear to be possible to distinguish many of the insulators made at the different plants, at least not until such as archaeological samples become available from the several plants. Tod (1977: 105) attributes the BRUNT mark only to the East Liverpool factory he was aware of the problem in distinguishing Brunt insulators (*Ibid.*: 74).



**“BRUNT” Cleat Insulators
Three Slightly Different Styles from the
Chaseland Site**



Tubular Insulators from the Chaseland Site



Knob and Split Knob Insulators

One distinctive split knob insulator found at the Chaseland site can be identified from the patent literature, for J. E. Mair was granted a patent July 3, 1917, assigning it to the Brunt company (U.S. Patent 1,232,364) allowing it to be identified. The distinctive cone-shaped base of the upper portion makes it easily identifiable. Because the patent was

assigned to the Brunt company, it probably was not manufactured by any other insulator companies, although this is not certain.

John Ervin Mair, born in 1883 in Chicago, where he was still living in 1910, was an electrical engineer but with an interest in aeronautics sufficient to result in the construction of a home-made biplane, as recorded by the *Chicago Daily News* (August 30, 1910) and glass plate negatives preserved in the Chicago Historical Museum. History (at least as recorded in the pages of the *News* is silent as to whether Mair's airplane ever flew or for that matter whether he managed to get it out of his back yard. In any case, by 1920 Mair was in Emsworthy, Allegheny Co., Pennsylvania, though during the interim he had passed some time in Ohio, for his son Earnest was born there around 1911.



J. E. Mair in Chicago, August 1910

(DN-0008662, *Daily News* negative, Chicago History Museum)

Mairs subsequently lived in Mars, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, where he worked for many years as an electrical engineer.



Mairs Biplane Under Construction 1910
(DN-0008677, Daily News negative, Chicago History Museum)

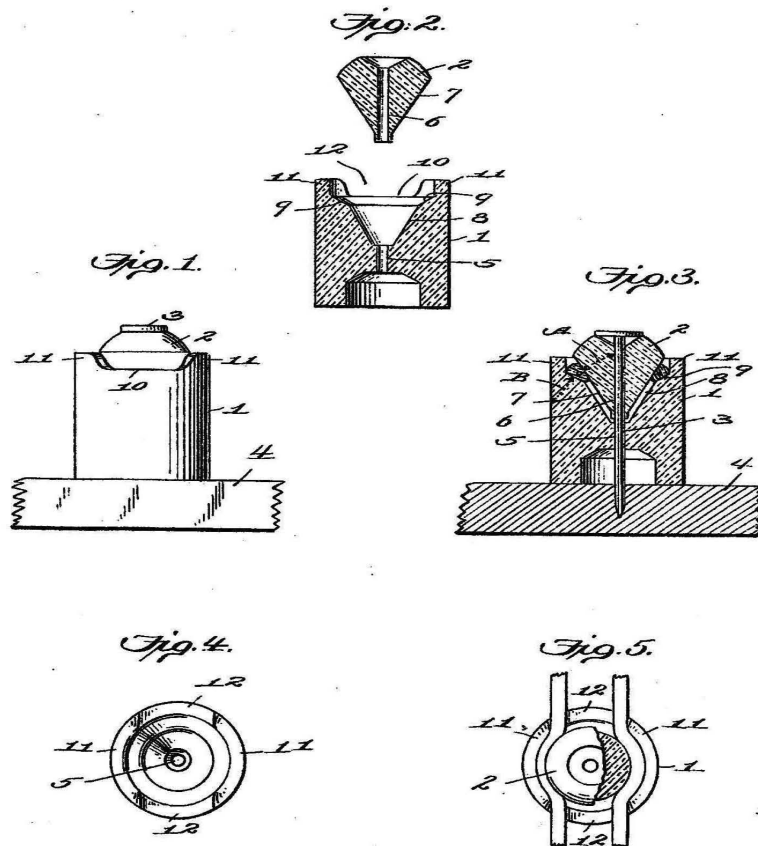


**Part of Mair Split Knob Insulator from
Brunt Site at Chaseland**

J. E. MAIR.
INSULATOR.
APPLICATION FILED NOV. 28, 1916.

1,232,354.

Patented July 3, 1917.



Witnesses:
Chas. Kesler
Glenn Brown

Inventor
John E. Mair
by *James L. Norris*,
Attorney.

**J. E. Mair's Patent for Split Knob
Insulator Assigned to Brunt 1917**



**Top of “BRUNT “CINCH” Split
Knob Insulator from Chaseland Site**

Another insulator designer of the period was Harley R. Markel of Dayton (1908) and Columbus (1910-1916), who patented four varieties of reversible split knob insulators. Markel grew up on a farm near Adelphi, Pickaway County, married and moved to Columbus at an early age, where he worked as an electrician, which undoubtedly explains his interest in electric insulators. In 1910 he was working as an insurance inspector and as an engineer for a fire insurance company in 1920, before moving to Cincinnati. Markel continued in the insurance business and died in Blue Ash, Ohio, in 1965.

It might be noted that a reversible split knob insulator very similar to the Markel insulator found at the Chaseland site has also been found at the site of the Akron Marble Co., which burned in 1904, the fire providing

a *terminus ante quem* date for the artifacts found at that site. The Akron examples can readily be distinguished not only by being smaller and slightly more rectangular in cross-section but also by possessing smaller, square rather than round screw holes and by lacking four corner bosses on the base. The significant fact is that very similar insulators were being produced at least six years before Markel's patent, which was the first for this rectangular style of reversible split knob. Very possibly Markel had invented this style at a significantly earlier date and was responsible for the Akron Marble Co. examples as well.

A split knob insulator marked "BRUNT CINCH" has also been found at Chaseland. Tod (1977: 106) lists this brand as being bound at the Brunt factory in East Liverpool.



**Unmarked Reversible Split
Knob Insulator, Brunt Site at Chaseland
Markel's Patent 992,570**

Joseph A. Nagle

Joseph A. Nagle (also Nagel) was born May 29, 1869, in Philadelphia, the son of William and Anna Nagel. Following his marriage to Mary (Mamie) Estela Jenkins in 1895 the Nagles moved to East Liverpool, where their only child, Joseph Curtis Nagle, was born in 1896. The family then moved to Zanesville, where in the father is listed as a musician in 1896 and through 1900. Somewhat oddly, in its brief obituary for Nagle the *Zanesville Signal* (June 24, 1932) makes no mention of his work in ceramics, remembering him only as the director of the Bauer Band, long a Zanesville musical institution, and noting that he had left Zanesville almost twenty years before his death.

The 1900 census lists him as “Foreman at pottery” and the 1901/02 city directory places him at Weller Pottery. The family lived in a boarding house run by his widowed mother-in-law at 295 North Fifth St. By 1905/06 he was working at Owens Pottery but *Brick* (May 1907) reported that he was leaving Owens (Zanesville Tile), to be general manager at Kenilworth Tile Co. Mamie very likely stayed in Zanesville while her husband worked at Kenilworth Tile, which was located in Newell, West Virginia, across the Ohio River from East Liverpool. By October, 1907, Nagle had resigned from Kenilworth and was back in Zanesville and in 1910 employed by a tile factory (very possibly Owens’ revitalized tile company).

Nagle exhibited an evident interest in Radford jasperware, produced in Zanesville for only a short time, ca. 1903. It is possible

even that Nagle was employed by the Radford Pottery (which moved to Clarksburg, West Virginia in 1903) or its short-lived successor, the Arc-en-Ceil Pottery, or that he got to know Albert or his father Edwin while working at Weller Pottery earlier. In any case, there are several rare pieces of molded jasperware pieces made by Nagle, apparently using Radford molds, the example illustrated herein being inscribed “Edgewood,” and initialed “J. A. N.” Another (only three pieces are known) is incised “J. A. Nagle/Z. O.”

Sometime around 1914 Nagle was hired as a salesman for the Brunt Tile and Porcelain Co. (*Brick and Clay Record*, May 19, 1914), although this does entirely accord with the previously cited statement that he was a part-owner. According to the *Record*,



**Rare Example of Nagle's "Edgewood" Ware
Made in Zanesville**



Zanesville Radford Jasperware Vase

“After being idle for many years the Chaseland pottery plant at Worthington is to be placed in operation but as a tile plant. George F. Brunt, for many years owner and manager of the Brunt Porcelain works at East Liverpool, whose plant was taken over by the General Porcelain Co. last year, with J.A. Nagle, of Zanesville, will take over the Chaseland pottery. With it the new owners will secure clear title to eight acres of land. Both floor and wall tile will be manufactured. The Chaseland plant has a capacity of 9 kilns. It is located on the Big Four railroad and the plant is one of the best built. Buildings are of brick and the floors are of concrete. When the General Porcelain Co. took over the electric porcelain potteries in the E.L. district, a plan was devised to consolidate all business. To this end a mammoth plant was built at Parkersburg and has recently been placed in operation. Mr.

Brunt then looked around for another business and has just closed the deal for the Chaseland property. Mr. Nagle has been identified with the tile business for many years.”

Part-owner or not, the need to travel (which would suggest he was heavily into the sales aspect of the firm) because of his work put stress on Nagle’s marriage, for his wife did not want to leave Zanesville and her family. The couple was divorced in 1916. By 1920 Nagle had remarried and is listed in city directories as superintendent of a tile factory, undoubtedly Brunt Tile and Porcelain. Interestingly, in 1922 he is listed as “artist” and from 1926 to 1932 as “ceramic engineer.” The Brunt plant had ceased operation in 1925 and for a good part of that time he was ceramic engineer at the Carling Tile Co., Macon, Georgia (*Ceramic*

Conclusion

Whatever the extent of the contributions of J. A. Nagle, the company name may to have changed, at least informally, with the end of tile production in 1920, to the The Brunt Porcelain Co. Several examples of jasperware advertising paperweights similar to those manufactured by the Mosaic Tile Co. of Zanesville were produced by the Brunt Co. and they are embossed “The Brunt Tile Co.” These are not dated but probably date prior to 1920, when the company ceased its tile making. (Stout 1923: 29, 85). Assuming that advertising pieces were the inspiration of Nagle, perhaps he had worked at Mosaic Tile rather than Owens upon his return to Zanesville from Kenilworth Tile. In any case, it clearly was Nagle rather than Brunt who had experience with tile. There appears to be little significance in the pieces



“Columbus” Brunt Tile Paperweight





Identical Flowers on Tile and Blotter

being labeled “G. F. Brunt Tile Co.,” other than that they were being used to promote the company’s tile rather than its porcelain insulators. Very likely it was the end of tile production that made Nagle look for work elsewhere, but unfortunately we do not know precisely when he did leave.

There also remains some uncertainty as to these name changes and as to whether tile production entirely ended in 1920. In November, 1921, *Brick and Clay Record* (59(11): 824) reported that the *Brunt Tile and Porcelain Co.* had closed down in late October for an indefinite period, perhaps for two or three months, depending on business conditions. Only electrical porcelain is mentioned in the note. In May, 1924 the “Brunt Porcelain Co.” (a name change that was made March 23, 1921, according to the

“Insulator Companies” website (<http://www.r-infinity.com/>)) announced that due to the porcelain business getting dull the company’s product was being changed from porcelain back to ceramic floor tile. Brunt, in this note in *Ceramic Industry*, averred that the company was manufacturing 7000 square feet of tile per day. Also mentioned is the fact that he had just returned after three weeks coping with a serious illness. Is it possible that the company’s business was so poor that it reverted to tile making in an attempt to stay afloat? This idea is difficult to reconcile with the fact that by February, 1925, Brunt was reporting a good demand for his product, specifying that “Tile made by the company are used extensively and this portion of the business has been developed a good deal in the past few months” (*Ibid.*, 4(2): 144).” At any rate, the company clearly was making tile as late as 1925. On

the other hand, the same journal (4(6): 470) reported in June, 1925, that Nagle was no longer general manager of the Brunt *Tile & Porcelain Co.* To further complicate matters, on February 4, 1926, the federal government charged two dozen porcelain manufacturing companies, including the Brunt *Tile and Porcelain Co.*, with anti-trust violations (*Portsmouth Daily Times*). By that time, however, George F. Brunt was managing the Midland Distributing Co. and his wife was managing a confectionery on West Rich Street, a block from where they lived in an apartment building at 203 Souder Avenue. Although the 1930 census lists Brunt as working for a porcelain company, city directories remain silent regarding his occupation, and it seems likely that production did cease around 1925. Brunt's obituary (*Columbus Dispatch*, August 8, 1934) does say that he engaged in the tile

and porcelain business in Columbus for 15 years. Wife Nellie survived him by nearly ten years, dying September 9, 1945. Both are buried in Riverside Cemetery, East Liverpool, Ohio. As for the Brunt Tile and Porcelain Co., Joseph Nagle's brief obituary in *Brick and Clay Record* mentions that the firm "merged" with the Standard Tile Co. of Zanesville around 1928. Today much of the site is either vacant or occupied by a 35-year-old brick building that has housed a commercial outlet for bathroom accessories and fixtures for at least the past twenty years. It is not known whether the company features mosaic tile.

References

Brick and Clay Record

Various issues as cited in text.

Ceramic Industry

Various issues as cited in text.

China, Glass, and Lamps

Various issues as cited in text.

Claybaugh, Joseph

1913 *History of Clinton County, Indiana .. With
Historical Sketches of Representative Citizens
and Genealogical Records of Many of the Old
Families.* A. W. Bowen & Company -
Indianapolis, Indiana.

The Clay-Worker

Various issues as cited in text.

Gates, William C., Jr.

1984 *The City of Hills and Kilns: Life and Work in
East Liverpool, Ohio.* East Liverpool Historical
Society, East Liverpool.

Gates William C., and Dana C. Ormerod
1982 The East Liverpool Pottery District:
 Identification of Manufacturers and Marks.
 Historical Archaeology 16(1-2): 1-358.

Glass and Pottery World
Various issues as cited in text.

Historic Preservation Guild of Hancock County
1986 *Findlay Illustrated*. Reprint of 1889 edition.

Insulator Companies Website
<http://www.r-infinity.com/> (viewed July 3, 2010)

Murphy, James L.
1994 Bell Pottery's Free Ride Ran Out of Gas.
 Antique Week 27(1): 1, 44.

Tod, Jack H.
1977 *A History of the Electrical Porcelain Industry in
 the United States*. The Author, Phoenix, AZ